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with a good roadstead and peir. Now Antrim was not created a borough until 1665 ; it never had a mayor, nor even a chief magistrate ; it never enjoyed the customs of any vessels whatsoever, nor possessed jurisdiction over any coast ; it scarcely contains 2000 inhabitants ; it is not a sea-port ; and its roadstead and peir on Lough Neagh, if such they may be called, hardly afford shelter for a fishing boat ! Ballycastle he represents to have glass-works, where none now exist, that manufacture having been long discontinued there. The harbour of Bangor, County of Down, he says is about three miles from the town, where, in fact, it is at it. Carrickfergus, he says, is a considerable place, with a linen-hall ; yet Carrickfergus is a small town, and never had a linen hall !

Many other things are equally erroneous ; for instance, he informs us, that the river Bann rises in the *Heveagh* mountains, though it is well known there are no mountains of that name in Ireland. Granite, we are told, is found five miles north of Belfast, though it is notorious no such stone is found in that country ; and the plant tormentil he represents as being used as a substitute for oak bark, in tanning, although no plants whatever are used here in that business. To complete the list of errors, he says the rebellion of 1798 broke out on the 23d March, instead of the 23d May ; and that the magpie is not found in Ireland, though it is a *very* common bird.—In the name of all that's marvellous, where did this learned Doctor collect such extraordinary information !!!

Such are the faithful accounts published in London of this country ; and such, puffed off by reviewers, equally ignorant of its real state, find a place in the library of credulous John Bull ; and are also im-

ported here, and, strange, "passing strange," bought at a high price, with considerable avidity. It is, however, to be wished that some author, already distinguished as an impartial historian, would give us the ancient and present state of Ireland ; such a work being highly a desideratum in modern literature.

M.S.

Antrim, August 29th, 1812.

For the *Belfast Monthly Magazine*.

ON THE ADVANTAGES OF A HABIT OF REFLECTION.

FOR the improvement of the mind, and the full development of its faculties, nothing is more indispensably necessary than a habit of reflection. Our outward senses will prove of very little service, in the acquirement of useful and lasting knowledge, and indeed we may almost as well be without them, if we do not reflect much, and patiently, on the information they convey.

The food we take will not nourish the frame, until it be acted upon, and animalized by the proper organs ; and, in like manner, the information we receive, and the new ideas we acquire, can never become our own, till we have digested and assimilated them to the mind, by the no less necessary process of reflection.

Solitude and silence have been sought by the wise of all ages ; in the midst thereof, they conversed with their own hearts, and putting aside the delusions of the world, by profound meditation they ennobled their souls, communed in secret with the Deity, and received a minute portion of his eternal wisdom. Their discourses, the result of deep and long continued contemplation, impressed their hearers with the idea that they were inspired, and their

writings still possess a lustre that appears almost divine.

In the books of the philosophers, the necessity of reflection is inculcated, in a manner which shows the importance they attached to it. We are every where desired to exert it in the search of knowledge, to receive nothing without examination, and to attach ourselves to no doctrine, until by patient investigation we be convinced of its truth.

Whence arise the ignorance and blindness of the major part of mankind? They possess eyes and ears, and every other organ of sense, as perfect as the most ingenious philosopher; but not having the habit of reflecting upon what they hear and see, they pass their lives, the slaves of appearances, daily deceived by every thing around them. Without the power of raising themselves in the scale of being, obscure without being innocent, and humble without being contented, they constitute their passions their governors, and follow their prejudices as their guides. Their existence is a sort of vegetation, elevated but a few degrees above the lower creation, and far different from that state of happiness and usefulness which they were intended to enjoy.

How different would be the situation of human society, if mankind in general were capable of thinking for themselves, instead of blindly following the opinions of others. How many false religions would vanish into nothing; how many tyrannical governments sink into dust; how many pompous establishments would be stripped of their gaudy colours, and exhibited in all their deformity! The trappings of royalty, the imposing garb of the hierarchy, the splendour of military array, would then make a different impression on the senses. All the extensive apparatus of deception would then fail of their effect. The

sickened eye would turn from the dangerous pomp, the ear would be shut to the bewitching strains of music, the magnificent spectacle would be disregarded, the actors driven from the stage, and the sable curtain of eternal night drop on the deluding spectacle.

The poet may sooth the mind with the pleasing prospect of human happiness in ages yet to come; and the philosopher may labour to awaken mankind to a sense of their powers, and their rights; but if human nature ever arouse from its lethargy, it must be when men have learned to reject the impositions of others, to reflect for themselves, to make reason their lord, and common-sense their guide.

Can we turn our eye over the page of history, can we contemplate the present state of human society, without feeling that there is something essentially defective in its constitution? The more we examine it, the more we shall find reason to attribute its defects to the want of a habit of reflection in the mind of man. Entirely engrossed by the pleasures of sense, his higher powers are suffered to decay, and he thus loses the most important instrument of happiness.

It is mind that distinguishes man from the brutes; but what is mind, if its faculties be allowed to languish for want of exercise? Never will human society rise to its highest pitch, till every member of it have acquired the habit of thinking for himself, of guiding his actions by the dictates of his judgment, and submitting to no controul but that of reason. If ever this era shall arrive, it will be to reflection that the blessing will be due, and we may, therefore, conclude, that to cultivate this faculty, is to improve one of the most valuable gifts of Heaven.

Dublin.

C.E.